



"Alles ist nach seiner Art."

SIEGFRIED, act ii.

# The Meister.

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## Notes on "Oper und Drama." 33.

**A**LMOST an apology is needed, for occupying the bulk of the present issue with an article quite un-Wagnerian in its spirit. As stated in No. XXIX., however, this "Modern Opera" is the article to which a considerable portion of Part I. of Wagner's "Oper und Drama" was a reply, and it has seemed to us better to place the whole remainder of it at once before our readers, rather than weaken its interest, both intrinsic and reflected, by distributing it over three or four issues. In No. XXXI. we propose to devote a page or two to comments, for which we now have not the necessary space.—EDITOR.

## "Modern Opera."

(2. THE ITALIANS.—*Continued from page 40.*)

This French tincture was most pronounced in the Opera; for, as Opera had been the peculiar art-bloom of the Restoration, with *it* must the reversal be most violent, and all its effects the deepest. In Paris there arose a musical cosmopolitanism, which grew in Opera to a sharply-marked variety of the hybrid style. In this regard it is significant that Rossini, at that very time, in Paris gave his special protection and assistance to a young Spanish opera-composer, Gasparo [? Jose Melchior] Gomis, an enthusiastic worshipper of Mozart and Haydn, but who copied Rossini's forms withal and just as gladly let himself be influenced by the spirit of French Neoromanticism. Rossini had left the national path of Italian Opera in the year 1829; he never returned to it.

But another, a far more interesting figure now entered the field, a man who was to make Opera as national a possession of the Italians as it had ever been: Bellini. The triumph of the July Revolution had soon died down. The deep sorrow of undeception was invading every nation; a sickly sentimentalism, symptoms whereof had already been shewn in the days of the Restoration, crabbedness and dogged discontent, were taking deep root. With these were blended the remains of that lust of the senses, that frivolity, which had brought about the enervation of the 'twenties. Bellini became the musical representative of this world-mood. As George Sand in literature, so Bellini in music; yet not merely as George Sand, but also as Rahel [wife of Varnhagen von Ense], as Bettina—a radically female character. To musical Young Germany he cannot be said to belong, any more than those ladies to its literary equivalent; but he stands in its entrance-hall. Half of his works fall within the last few years before the July Revolution, half within the early 'thirties: thus, too, the inner import of his works stands in midst of a transitional period, facing two ways.

If Young Germany affected a world-grief,\* with Bellini it is the sorrow of deep-degraded Italy that speaks out from the elegiac groundwork of his strains. For a people like the Italian, it is significant that in this yielding, sickly sentimentalism it recognised the inmost feeling of its heart. The unhappy Italians sang—and sing to-day!—these Bellinian melodies, just as the ancient Hebrews sang "a song of Zion" when they sat weeping by the waters of Babylon. Bellini roused a patriotic enthusiasm, as scarce ever another tone-master. The life of the early-taken youth became a national mythos; he was set by side of Raphael. The historian cannot better depict the political mood of Italy in the 'thirties, than by making plain the meaning of this apotheosis of Bellini. The selfsame operas which produced hardly any other effect in Germany than did Rossini's, which rocked the nation's spirit into soothing slumber, in Italy were revolutionary; an omen for young Italy! What a nation, that could find the depths of its soul laid bare in these voluptuous laments! Rossini was more admired in Italy, perhaps, but Bellini won him fanatics. Rossini had coquetted with the levity and frivolity of an utter national relaxation, Bellini breathed out in tones the nation's grief at its abasement. Bellini has always been accounted a musical phenomenon: the history of the last two revolutionary years has shewn that his appearance and his reception were also a political phenomenon. A people that makes a Bellini its Tyrtæus, is a people lost; and however grandiloquently may its uprising commence, the day that brings Novara will not be long in coming!

Regarded from a musical standpoint, too, Bellini's operas have had a curious destiny: they have increased in 'body' with advancing years, like certain wares that improve by storage. I may instance his "Sonnambula" and "Norma." What a fill of characteristiqué, whereof the composer could scarcely have allowed himself to dream, has been instilled into the chief characters of these operas as time rolled on. For he gave their

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\* "*Weltschmerz*," a nerveless kind of cynicism and pessimism, for which Heine and his school were soundly rated at the time.—Tr.

figures such merely general contours, that it remains open to every singer to make of them whatever he will and can. And down to this very day the greatest singers of all nations have made it their business to individualise Bellini's characters, particularly the feminine, in every direction. That *Norma*, for instance, who rises before the mental eye of anyone who has heard much, is not simply a creation of Bellini's : she has been gradually created by himself, by Malibran, by Pasta, by Lind and many another. But this fact most strikingly characterises the whole style of dramatic composition among the new Italians. Whereas in German Opera the singer has had enough to do if his rendering has not blurred and generalised the composer's individualisation, in Italian Opera he has first to create the particular character through his singing, and to pay heed to moulding detailed features and adding definite colour where the composer merely gave the possibility thereof.

Not even Bellini could escape the influence of the Parisian magic circle. From the contagion of German austerity and thoroughness he had known to defend himself, as Rossini advised him, but French Neoromanticism took him prisoner. His "*Puritani*" offers evidence of this. People thought he had entered the path of profounder dramatic life, of more intense expression, with this opera, and foretold a brilliant future. Death cut off the prophecy's fulfilment. Perhaps at the nick of time. For in his "*Puritani*" Bellini had begun to quit the national path. Nor has this opera, so far as I am aware, ever reached the fabulous popularity of, above all others, his "*Sonnambula*" and "*Norma*." But it remains a culture-historical portent, that any people in the 19th century could elevate into a national opera a work like the "*Sonnambula*," whose whole dramatic motivation is based on a malady of the ganglionic system in a damsel of weak nerves!

Bellini's operas introduced a new development into the art of dramatic vocalism : they founded a school of singers of their own. Just as Rossini brought opera-singing to a virtuosity of spruce

embellishment with coloratura and easy graces of expression scarce dreamt before in so general a measure, so Bellini formed a mellow, broad, an inward tone in the delivery of the cantilena, adopted since by almost all the chiefs of modern stage-song. Of no recent German opera-composer can one say that he would have succeeded in a thing like this, that his tone-poems would have called into existence a formally new school of stage-singing. Nor could Bellini's Italian successors have done it. This fact alone might suffice to teach us the weight of those two master's musical influence.

Bellini never gathered round him, as Rossini, a flock of blind adorers who counterfeited whole operas of his, inch by inch. All the more have the minutiae of his style and mannerisms passed over into every kind of musical production. Especially that small fry which stocks the musical market of the day for amateurs, even in Germany to this hour, is mostly turned-out in Bellini's manner. Quite singularly deeply had Bellini's influence made itself felt in Vienna, engendering among the majority of local musicians that flirtation with Italianisms which sets so distasteful a stamp upon the operas and vocal works of Nicolai and others.

Donizetti, to whom we now must turn, possessed none of the originality of his two great predecessors. He trod the path that has led the Germans astray so often, since Mozart: he experimented. Rossini and Bellini had a fixed goal, fixed forms: down to their last, their Paris period, they both remained consistent. Donizetti was consistent for just so long as he was insignificant; in measure as he began to strive for higher self-dependence, he became unfaithful to himself. In his "*Elisire d'amore*" he treated the *opera buffa* almost quite in Rossini's manner; his "*Figlia del regimento*," on the contrary, is a Frenchified comic opera. His "*Belisario*" apes very much the colour of Bellini's tones; his "*Lucia*," his "*Lucrezia Borgia*" are handled in the spirit of French Neoromanticism; and in the "*Favorita*" he has positively tried to appear interesting through echoes from the German style. Nevertheless Donizetti was far too much an Italian, to let himself be betrayed into such uncertain fumbings, such eclecticism, as the



new German masters. In our article upon the Folkslied (in the third volume of the *Gegenwart*) we have already mentioned incidentally that in the structure of his arias Donizetti inclined far more than his two forerunners to the national root-form of the canzonetta, also that his melodies endeavour to reproduce the accents (*Klänge*) of the Italian Folk-song, albeit they result as a rule in nothing but an involuntary caricature of popular strains. Beyond this, Donizetti's operas keep within set bounds of form. One cannot argue away a natural economy in his handling of the means of musico-dramatic expression, which most advantageously distinguishes his works from those of most French and German opera-composers of the present day, and has secured for them the predicate of very grateful, easily performable repertory-pieces. And Donizetti knows perfectly well what he wants with his operas. He does not fly too high; he is quite content with engrossing and entertaining the great public in the manner of a Parisian feuilleton-novelist, and now and then dumfounding it. He follows his Italian and French forerunners like a gleaner, but he always knows how to bind a sheaf on his own account from the ears thus gathered up.

Donizetti's course of artistic evolution was a highly original one: it shews us, as though in dramatic embodiment, all the opposing ferments in this typical modern Italian. Not for nothing had the young tailor's 'prentice, Donizetti, patched the frayed garments of the great singing-master, Bordogni. The singer proved his gratitude by teaching the tailor those principles of flowing, natural song which, in spite of all temptations from the so-called dramatic style of the French, the later maestro never forgot. The tailor wanted to become a church-composer. Donizetti, the greatest evangelist of voluptuousness and frivolity in Opera, threw himself with all eagerness upon the composition of serious church-music. Moreover Fate led the budding composer to a German instructor, old Simon Mayr, who had acclimatised himself in Italy so as to inspire the Italians, through half a century, with respect for German solidness. But this severe

course of study did not last long. With almost the same ease wherewith in a short circuit, often indeed in one and the same opera, he sprang from one direction to another, did he even then exchange the ecclesiastic style for the theatrical. A whole string of insignificant operas, whose names have long been forgotten, was spun-out in next to no time, without the master having gained any particularly brilliant success. Only when he began to disown his nationality, only when he worked-up in Paris the elements of Meyerbeer's, Auber's and Halévy's method, and thus brought to full reality that hybrid Franco-Italian Opera already prophesied by Rossini and Bellini,—only then did he begin to make headway everywhere. Italian Opera's naïvety was thrown away by Donizetti, without his being able to recoup it for the loss. For Rossini and Bellini I know no thorough parallel among recent German opera-composers, but many a one for Donizetti. He denotes for us not only that eclecticism which rules in German Opera to this hour, but in him one may observe even our reactionary tendency, that fain would build up products racy of the Present through study of the buried Past. Thus he has the great merit, for example, of having revived the *opera buffa*, which in the 'twenties had wellnigh faded out and died away. However, this restorative endeavour of his was different in essence from that of our German masters. He altogether lacked that sincerity of historical study which distinguishes these latter; he had not that, as I might call it, ethical motive, which since a little while ago has driven the Germans from the dissoluteness and inner decadence of an intrinsically void artistic Present back to the Past, there to seek invigoration of character, of talent, of art-dexterity. This it is that offends us the deepest, in Donizetti: that his art has no moral core. We miss every trace of simplicity of heart, we find nothing but coquettish Reflection. Tragic and heroic Opera, comic and conversational Opera,—to use a colloquial expression, all was fish that came to his net. This contradiction between the unhallowed workmanship (*des weihelosen Schaffens*) and the artistic import of the subject comes out quite glaringly in Donizetti's

tragic operas. Whereas in his "Lucrezia Borgia"—where the subject deals with the same wanton, blasé scenes of a depraved generation as, with trifling alterations in the time-costume, one might also find in Paris heretofore—he appears somewhat a master in his coquettish, luscious, sensuous style of writing, and furnishes a genuine character-picture: the identical style in "Belisario," where it is applied to a simpler, deeper type of heroes, becomes positively revolting to the purer æsthetic sense. On the other hand, his "Figlia del regimento" is a masterpiece of Conversation-opera, so far as one is inclined to allow currency to that genre at all.

Thus in Donizetti we are confronted with the mirror-picture of an art-period unsettled in itself, unclear in its endeavours, at once enervated and over-excited. The veritable terrorism, which Italian Opera exercised over the German stage for more than 30 years, broke down with him. For although his operas made their way in Germany too, because our musical particularism—which is even greater in Opera, if possible, than in political life—was unable to offer a compact resistance, yet through Donizetti Italian Opera came to the ground, of itself. Its strictly national demeanour had been its magic armour, and only through that had it triumphed so long. The mute sorrow of the Italian was followed by abortive attempts at national liberation—abortive through the people's inner unsettledness (*Zerfahrenheit*) and through its superstitious hope of help from outside, particularly from France:—and upon Bellini followed Donizetti!

It was in the spring of 1848 that Donizetti died, mad. Hardly the slightest notice was taken of the admired master's death. At that time, who had leisure to think of a musician? We then believed that Donizetti had died at the appropriate moment, that the near future would surely need a different type of musician? But we were wrong. Were he alive to-day, he still, alas! might be accounted a "Musician of the Present."

Donizetti found many imitators in Italy; but none of them have struggled into any recognised importance, or even so much as



got their names talked of beyond their native frontiers. The solitary one who has succeeded in partly establishing his works upon the German stage, is Giuseppe Verdi. As a matter of fact he had developed Donizetti's manner in various directions, but, unfortunately, more its failings than its merits. Moreover his achievements, regarded from an art-historical standpoint, are as yet so little independent and individual, that in our cursory review a closer survey of his works would be totally unjustified.

### 3. THE FRENCH.

At the commencement of the 'twenties French Opera fed a somewhat insignificant existence partly on the traditions of a better past, partly on imitations of Rossini's method. That pompous Heroic Opera style, which had come into vogue in the days of the Empire mainly through the works of Lesueur and Spontini, which traced its pedigree to Gluck, and did not suit amiss a generation accustomed to the loud-mouthed talk of cannons: that style, which bore as much resemblance to Gluck's mode of writing as David's paintings to the Antique, had quickly dropped from usage. All the more had Boieldieu's catchy echoes of popular song won ground, ever since the years of peace. If one regarded the efforts of older masters, such as Cherubini, Méhul and Berton, more as an isolated phenomenon, it almost seemed as though French Opera were playfully returning to the point whence it had started on its newer self-impelled career, namely to the Vaudeville. And why not? The loose-built Vaudeville has so profound a national right in France—since it reaches back to the most popular French mode of song, the Romance to wit—that, often as one may oust it, yet it always comes knocking at the door again, and surely will end by developing into a National Opera of the French. But it was no healthy, vigorous, popular spirit, that spoke to us from the easy-going French operas of Boieldieu's later period and the (contemporary) earlier period of Auber; no, it was a spirit of enervation. Hence

the nation soon shewed its surfeit of these harmless products, 'Tis no good token, that Auber's firstfruits, which manifest scarce anything but a Frenchified watering of Rossini's forms, should have won an almost speedier popularity in Germany than in France. The truth is, that nothing like so great a state of mental tension was to be found on this side of the Rhine, as then in Paris; we still allowed ourselves to be lulled to sleep by the sweet faint-hearted strains that predominate in Auber's "Concert à la cour," his "Neige" and kindred works, whilst men over there were already listening breathlessly for an imminent catastrophe—were it, provisionally, a mere catastrophe of Opera's! And Opera's catastrophe indeed came two years earlier than the political one. In the year 1828 appeared the "Muette de Portici" ["Masaniello"]. This opera was a musical revolution, its effect was instantaneous, irresistible. Through it French Neoromanticism had sprung forth fully-armed, as from the earth, and taken the whole field at its first charge. Veteran masters, long settled down to their own jog-trot, had their heads turned completely round, and followed the new flag. Auber was not so important, his work not so powerful in itself; but that so suddenly, almost as it were by hazard, he had found the note to fit the times, that he had dared to set up over-night so huge a contrast with everything that had gone immediately before—this raised the notable creation fathoms high above itself. As Rossini had been the composer of the reactionary Holy Alliance, so Auber was the composer of the July Revolution. Does it not almost sound an irony, that the great political landmarks of the new era should have wellnigh every-time been spectrally announced beforehand by an opera-spook?

We here have frequently employed the term "French Neoromanticism": we therefore owe an explanation, and the "Muette de Portici" affords an admirable handle. Here, before all things, we meet the artistic Emancipation of the Masses, ay, their æsthetic triumph over the Individual. In the "Muette de Portici" the Folk as Mass first comes into its full dramatic

rights; the Chorus—which hitherto had been used in opera as a mere lyric set-off, or, if higher game was flown at, had formed a running commentary, in the sense of antique choruses, as interpreter of ideas eternal—now takes its position in the foreground as active hero. Not the mere arias of the aristocratic soloists, not merely their ensemble in quartets, sextets etc., are to musically display the drama's life: the main effect is transferred to the operations of the masses. Even the solo-song, as such, steps back behind the massive workings of the orchestra. The aria, which heretofore had formed the kernel of the whole, sinks in the "Muette de Portici" to the flattest insignificance; on the other hand the popular song, however folk might cry it down as heterodox (*wenn auch noch so arg verketzert*), comes forward in the barcaroles with marvellous effect. But people did not stop at this point. Having once proclaimed Emancipation as their musical tendency, they were determined to carry it through to the end. Every traditional maxim is diligently set aside. The abruptest contrasts are delighted in; well-nigh in every note one means to shew that one is sick to death of the slumbrous sentimentalism, the sugared prettiness, which had been the mode till then. To be sure, Auber means nothing more than just to shew it, for in his "Muette" from time to time he is as much entangled with Rossini's flourishes as in his earlier works. But no matter: it heightens the contrast, and contrast at all costs is what one asks for. That's why the French Neoromanticists so delight in setting dance-music and church-music side by side. Never have the solemn sounds of the organ, the reverend long-drawn tones of the mass and the chorale, been oftener dragged into Opera by the hair, than by these composers, whilst they have at like time brought the modernest ball-music upon the stage more busily than anyone. This juxtaposition of such crying contrasts, not from inner necessity, but simply from an outer reckoning of the wherewithal to violently excite the hearer's nerves, not seldom attains the character of most odious frivolity. The straining for a contrast of rank voluptuousness and

creepy awe is carried into every detail of melodic and harmonic treatment. Hence the delight in strident, unprepared, and often preposterous discords. Could not even the simplest song of joy, forsooth, be made more piquant by tricking it with discords such as older masters would at most have employed to portray the keenest anguish of the soul? Hence that accent of unmotivated, and therefore foppish world-grief, which is winding its way into even Strauss's waltzes. The harsher and more abrupt the harmonic modulation, the more "romantic" did one deem it. Nay, one went so far as purposely to throw a radically false progression into the harmony, to shew that one had emancipated oneself out and out, that one could smite each binding regulation in the face. Just as literary authors of a similar school believed they were giving proof of genius, when they now and again committed an intentionally gross offence against logic or grammar, so these musicians delighted in larding their style with contradictions. The Frenchman would here and there coquet with an Italian phrase, the German with a French progression; exactly as the writers of Young Germany coquetted with gallicisms, as Victor Hugo bade intentional defiance to the rules of academic classicism through all kinds of wondrous foreign terms and constructions. Now, as one made so bold with every detail, one necessarily had to drive the dramatic climaxes to outermost exaggeration; and one behaved so arrantly in this at last, that one stepped quite out of the realm of Opera and fell into that Melodrama which had been borne to its grave not long before, in France, amid jeers and hootings. No Frenchman more plainly recognised this, than Berlioz. With the strongest inner bent towards dramatic composition, at first he did not make for Opera at all, but evolved for himself a new variety of Melodrama. This was consistent, just as Berlioz in other respects is the most consistent of recent French musicians. When he turned towards the theatre, however, he wrote operas which could not possibly be performed; that, too, was consistent. Berlioz was also the only man honest enough not to dally with the Italians, whose whole musical

cast of thought, so long as it stays true to itself, is at variance with French neoromanticism: he openly confessed that he hated Italian opera-composers. As Auber on the stage, so has Berlioz emancipated the masses in the orchestra. He has expanded, as it were, the individual violins into a whole populace of violins, and so on through all the other instruments. By this means he attains effects which certainly must border on the fabulous; if only they were executable anywhere out of Paris!

With the "Muet de Portici" Auber had made the first throw: to others he left it, to advance in the spirit of that opera. Herold and Halévy carried the Neoromantic school farther in the heroic and tragic direction. Auber on the other hand, who had arrived at musical tragedy as if by chance, who seems to have become a revolutionary almost against his will—like so many statesmen,—now turned his back on world-convulsing themes: he began at last to strike the French-national note of the romance and vaudeville in Comic Opera, a thing which he had not been quite able to hit in his first period. In his "Fra Diavolo" and latterly in his "La part du Diable" he has presented us with typic models of the French Conversation-opera, with works that to us appear truly delightful through their sprightly, thoroughly national note of the Romance,—which latter he is most clever at strewing in, wherever certain contortions and exaggerations might run the risk of reminding us somewhat too vividly of the founder of the neoromantic school.

Adam has advanced upon this road far more determinedly than Auber. However scamped the workmanship of his operas, to us they seem positively refreshing after the red-hot potions of the neoromantic school. After so much manufactured pathos, after so much artificial grief and pumped-up jollity, it was comforting to meet an altogether feather-brained composer, who really meant nothing beyond trotting out his levity to please us. From the outset, Adam made no grand professions: he fabricated light musical trifles to meet the day's demand, and thus he climbed his airy way to Opera. So that his operas are really nothing more than



worked-up vaudevilles, and his best melodies smack always of the gutter—such gutter-songs, however, as many a learned musician would be mighty proud of inventing. Adam is one of the few modern opera-composers who pretend to being nothing further than they really are. The superficiality of his work is always so undisguised, that it doesn't offend us; and even though he be up to his ears in all the small artistic coquetries and peculiarities of his fellow-countrymen, yet it is highly to his credit that he has endeavoured throughout to catch that light, that popular tone, which will always be the best to suit French Opera's complexion. In recent times Adam has found several successful followers. Albeit their works have scarcely crossed the boundaries of France, they yet supply us with a proof that it here is no question of a mere single personality, but of a whole tendency, a tendency which, however closely it may now appear to fraternise with the Neoromanticists, will soon form the most perilous opposition to them, and, if things go well, will carry back French Opera to its national basis.

A direct antithesis to Adam's artistic career is the evolutionary course pursued by Herold. He, too, composed originally in happy unconcern, and strung his tiny operas not unworthily to the sparkling chain of ballad-plays by Nicolo Isouard and Boieldieu, who, like modern troubadours, had the art of ennobling the naïve tone of the Romance through the melting accents of romanticism. His "Marie" is a tender blossom of this graceful style of writing. Then came Auber's daring move, and in the intoxication of the burning new idea, Herold, like so many others, stepped off the wonted track. He was wellnigh the only one of the older masters to plunge headlong into the turmoil of the new musical movement. But his whole cast of mind, his whole past stood at such glaring variance with it, that, once he had abandoned himself, he no longer had the power to master it. He went from extreme to extreme, and became, from an artistic point of view, the genuinely tragic offering on the shrine of Neoromanticism. By descent a German, Herold was not feather-brained enough to be able, like Auber, to laugh to scorn the demons that he had un-

chained. He meant too honestly; in his "Zampa" he desired in solemn earnest to draw the legitimate conclusion from the neoromantic premises. But he forgot that this conclusion—in its ultimate term—was a monstrosity; so Zampa became in truth a monster, an involuntary caricature, wherein grimace was wonderfully blended with single features of the noblest artistic prompting. "Zampa" was the precursor of Meyerbeer's grand operas; only with this distinction,—Meyerbeer's distortions are painted on so gigantic a scale, that their grandeur of style prevents any impression of caricature from arising. Herold took with him to the grave the unreconciled dissension which Auber had cast into his erst so peaceful art-life. He left behind him an unfinished opera, "Ludovico," and to us it appears significant that the same young composer should have undertaken its completion who afterwards brought to a successful issue Herold's whole abortive attempt, namely to carry through the neoromantic style in Tragic Opera,—Halévy.

Halévy had studied much. He entered the field of battle clad in full panoply of musical science. He knew how to control his means: not for nothing had he spent five years with Cherubini in the contrapuntal school. His mastery of musical architectonics points across to Germany; he went to work with full self-consciousness, with clear perception of his task. What had been with Auber a lucky moment, with Herold a dim consuming impulse, became with him a thing of scientific knowledge, of æsthetic conviction. Halévy is an abnormality in the history of French Opera: never has he been light-minded. Simple tasks don't prosper with him; on the other hand, he is master of the situation where others begin to despair. In musical respects he perhaps has never written a more perfect work than his "L'éclair," an opera without choruses and without plot, in which two tenors and two sopranos simply stand on the stage the whole evening through. Halévy here unfolds a wondrous wealth of most delicate nuances; he becomes interesting where everyone else would have been tedious, whilst in other pieces he becomes tedious just where

the interest could have been taken up in handfuls. Halévy has founded no epoch: his operas stand in no such direct correlation with the moods of the age, as the works of Rossini, Bellini and Auber. For the musician he is the most attractive among the new French opera-composers, for the æsthetic culture-historian, on the other hand, the least significant. This he has in common with many good German opera-composers of the present day. With them he also shares the fate of writing in constant conflict with himself, of his creations being as often a denial of his inner mind as its faithful mirror. His culture stands higher than his production: one detects that he is making concessions to the taste of the age at cost of his better convictions. Already he is beginning to experiment. One might have thought that, after his great successes in the heroic and tragic style, with his "Juive," he would have continued on that road. Instead thereof he has promptly leapt aside, and, in his "Mousquetaires de la reine" and other works, has thrown himself upon Conversation-opera, for which he lacks all inner calling, all naïvety, all easy flow of style. Here he lavishes a wealth of ingenious ideas and artistic work, where superficiality would have proved more effective by far—just like our German opera-composers. For the same reason his latest work, "Le val d'Andorre," has journeyed across the German boards with tolerably small effect. Halévy's melodies are patchwork: he sacrifices the flow of song to that dramatic 'effect' which rather lies in a chopped-up recitative and the combinations of the orchestra. This is a typically French feature; even old Lully behaved in a similar way. Halévy, more than the other modern Frenchmen, disdains all coquetry with Italian vocalism; and here he stands nearest to Berlioz. This new-French maxim, that forgets melody for sake of dramatic expression, has already laid the first foundations of a new school of stage-singing, for which we might foretell a great future. It is that school which we in Germany had a recent opportunity of admiring in the person of the first tenor of the Paris Grand Opéra, Roger. Here vocal delivery (*der Gesangsvortrag*) no longer appears as an end in itself,

but merely as a means of dramatic expression : Opera is becoming a musically-recited play. So that the new Frenchmen have reached the diametrically opposite point to that whence the old Italians began the first great ascent of Opera, 150 years ago. To us, however, there seems to be an inner nature-necessity which dictates that the whole body of Opera shall follow this transformation into the musically-recited Play. Every sign is pointing in that direction. The musical treatment of Opera in Germany, France and Italy, at every step is turning more decidedly that way; and even the art of vocal rendering and dramatic realisation of Opera upon the stage has been obliged to fall in with the general march.

Never has French Opera played so prominent a rôle, as in the [? 2] decads just gone by. Without lifting itself to any remarkable independence, from a purely æsthetic point of view, through its musical promulgation of a circle of ideas of world-historical bearing it has worked like the leaven in the Gospel, which, however small its bulk, yet leavens and sets the whole lump in fermentation. So comes it, that we have to look for the greatest results of modern French Opera, not so much among the French themselves, as among the Germans and Italians; and so also it is that a German, Meyerbeer, has carried French Neoromanticism to the summit of its rule. Paris has become the natural centre of Modern Opera, not through the highest master-works having been created there, but because a new principle in musical drama, an idea that has set our whole Culture-history on fire, proceeded first from thence.

#### 4. THE GERMANS.

We now pass on to German Opera. Up to this point we have been able to draw in large groups; we had serried masses before us, and might limit ourselves to sketching their most projecting figures; for it would have been more confusing than enlightening, to submit the numerous less important Italian and

French opera-composers to a closer scrutiny. Quite otherwise is it with German Opera. Here, the more we approach the present, the more the large groups vanish and a whole mesh of separate intercrossing lines replaces them; little people are often just as momentous as great masters, and, in lieu of a broad sketch in outline, we now must engage in the most exhaustive detail-painting, to hit the characteristic marks. Whereas with French and Italian Opera the public relations of political life not seldom gave us instructive hints, here the mutual bearings of Opera and literary life take up the foreground, and we find a nation with whom for a whole generation the history of Literature has stood in place of the history of Culture,—and indeed a literary history just as much in shreds and tatters, just as much a victim to the extreme of Particularism, as the recent history of our political being. But in artistic life particularism avenges itself by far more heavily, than in political. Despite so many admirable attempts, despite a pre-eminent inner artistic solidness (*Gediegenheit*), in Opera the sceptre of world-dominion, scarce won through Gluck and Mozart, has been snatched away from us again. Our stages have been brought under the régime, firstly of the Italians, secondly of the French; and whilst every more important operatic work soon finds its way to us over the Alps and across the Rhine, it is only now and again that an exception may be noted, that a new German opera has come to a hearing in France or even Italy. So overpowering is the weight of the serried mass, here also, as against the most inspired of individual attempts!

Yet one great figure, which has drawn a compact group around it—as last of its type—still stands at the gates of present German Opera: Karl Maria von Weber. His stage-works have a national, a political significance: together with his songs, they denote the last echo of that access of patriotic romanticism which inspired and filled the soul of our people throughout the War of Liberation. Opera here did not prophetically precede the national movement, as we have frequently found with the Italians and French: rather, at a time when noble enthusiasm was broken



already in political and literary life, when the extreme of enervation had begun to fill its place, did Opera once more take up the lofty note, to let it melancholy die away in song.

Weber was by no means the first to introduce the romantic tendency into Tone-art. Beethoven had long preceded him, and in Opera itself Spohr had given much earlier currency to that one-sided, exclusive Romanticism into which Beethoven's universal spirit could never cramp itself. But how radically different were Weber's operas from those of Spohr, how quite other their effect! Even in his operas Spohr remained the idealist romanticist, spiritual but abstract, dignified, stifling the dramatic effect with ingenious combinations; Weber, on the contrary, struck the nation's fundamental note, allowed full play to that subjective inwardness in which the German so delights, and set a striking dramatic characteristic above all else. The story is told of Rossini, that he used to go to the Apennines and listen to the herdsmen's songs, whenever he was at a loss for new themes for his arias. Weber went a step farther: in his operas he set the popular songs themselves in place of arias. What the productive Romanticists of German literature-history strove for, taught theoretically, but could never practically attain, Weber attained it in his operas. He unfolded the national and popular romanticism in all its loveliness, and thereby gained the People's heart. Thus one may say that the German romantic school, in a narrower sense, put nowhere forth a lovelier flower than in Weberian Opera. In a truly astonishing manner, in one artistic deed it fulfilled all that Tieck and the Schlegels had propounded as the highest requirements of romantic art. The Middle Ages with their knighthood and love's service ("Euryanthe"), with the tender heart-mysticism of religious faith (Agathe in the "Freischütz"), together with the Oriental fairy-world ("Oberon"), unroll themselves before our gaze, transfigured by their modern garb of lyric sentimentality. Even that Irony about which the Romanticists talked so much, as a main ingredient of their poetry, comes strongly out in Weber's operas. Still more was this trait developed later by Marschner, whose

Friar Tuck appears to us one of the happiest musical examples of that irony,—a point to which we shall presently return. Just as the Romantic school of poets had sprung up in opposition to the flatness of poetic and scientific Rationalism, so Weber set his operas against the downright rationalistic creations of a Winter, a Weigl, a Gyrowetz, who had deadened the transparence of the older Viennese tone-school into a kind of home-made musical brew of Iffland's comedy. Still more! As the literary Romanticists, almost to a man, had worked their way on roads of Doctrine to the peculiarities of their productive method, so Weber was probably the first of the more important German opera-composers to make his art the subject of æsthetic-scientific study, as also to ply a literary pen in that direction. But Weber's romanticism had no such fertile prototypes, as his poetic comrades found in Shakespeare, Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, in Calderon, Cervantes and the poetic treasures of the Orient: on his own resources had he to draw, and hence he turned out works of a quite different stripe of originality from that of the school-romanticists. And it was precisely in stage-poetry that the romantic poets proved themselves the most barren; despite their Shakespeare studies, they set not even a half-Shakespearian drama on its legs. Here the parallelism springs aside from Weber, and leaps across to Spohr. Spohr's operas, when read in the score, appear to be such model works that one often can scarce comprehend their relatively small effect upon the stage, precisely as the Romanticists have written dramas most excellent for being read, but not for being acted. Still more striking is this comparison when applied to Spohr's most recent operas, which seem to have been written out-and-out for study from the score, as those dramas for mere book-reading. Nevertheless it is easy to explain how romanticism could involve those poets in an actual dramatic barrenness, whereas in music it called to light such epoch-making operas as those of Weber. For, just because of music's greater generality of expression, romanticism led in Opera to a more sharply outlined characteristic, in direct ratio as in Drama it effaced all

marks of character; nay, the romantic tendency was the first to help Opera's ownest essence to an utterance at all, whereas it came on the other hand into a certain contradiction with the most prevalent forms of higher Instrumental-music. Through romanticism, also, music was brought into a much closer relationship with poetry than theretofore had been the case: it helped, in an undreamt fashion, to establish that intimate alliance of them both so essential for the opera. Where verse so musical as that of Tieck and others confronted the tone-poet, there the starched, one-sided *Musikant* must needs be gradually driven out, and a more universal artistic culture, neglected longer by musicians than by anyone else, must make its entry. Only, this more intimate relation between text-poet and opera-composer led, in its turn, to great misuses. In Paris, where the turning-out of operatic texts is practised as a rule in quite a factory fashion, a workmanlike sureness in the build of this literary article-of-industry has thereby been acquired, a sureness in admirable correspondence with the composer's need. The German master, on the contrary—already directed to all kinds of experiments, in lieu of settled forms, for the musical portion of his opera—is abandoned for his text to the wavering attempts of middling poets, who take thought for poetic finish and individualisation even in the skeleton of the libretto.\* The telling operas have always had their texts from the poetic factory of a monopolist; and if Metastasio and Scribe had not been great manufacturers, the operatic epochs connected with their names would never have made so signal a mark. So here again in Germany we have particularism, pettifoggery, experiments!

The victory of Weber's "*Freischütz*," at the beginning of the 'twenties, was not merely a musical, it was also a national triumph.

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\* "*Die schon in dem Skelett des Libretto an poetische Ausführung und Individualisierung denken*"—by a not very uncommon use of the German genitive, "the skeleton of the libretto" evidently signifies "the libretto which ought to be a mere skeleton," for this author throughout assigns to the musician, not to the poet! the entire *individualising* of dramatic characters!—Tr.

In Weber's romanticism was proclaimed a rebellion of the German spirit against the world-dominion of Rossini, who then was at the zenith of his power. The musical romanticists of Germany thus took up a hostile attitude toward Italy and its art, similar to that assumed by the romantic school of poets toward France. To be sure, in the latter there was also involved a political hostility of far greater purport, that against the Napoleonic despotism. As Tieck and Schlegel saw in French literature the archetype of *Zopf*, so did Weber and his companions regard the conventional aria-lumber of Rossini. With these last we therefore do not find that friendship for the art-forms of the Romanic South which the romantic poets manifested by their predilection for sonnets and canzone. It was reserved for the newer musical romanticism to make good what had here been omitted, to gain itself fresh force and fire by going, not indeed to Rossini, but to Palestrina and the old Italian masters down to Astorga and Pergolese. And what the romantic school of poets had found in Dante and Shakespeare, that the modern romantic line of music found through Mendelssohn in the old Italians, together with Bach and Beethoven, namely the primal canon of Romantic Music.

The Romantic school of music, by laying such successful hands on Opera, has driven its branches far deeper into the Present than in poetry [*sic*], and, as a brilliant proof of Romanticism's productive power, it must here be mentioned that through Opera it has also essentially contributed to fruitful growth abroad; as, for instance, French Neoromanticism has undoubtedly received a far greater stimulus from Germany in music, than in poetry.

Widely as Weber's influences reach, however, the Opera did not long hold purely to the line drawn out by him. Weber gathered round him no such slavish troop of imitators, as Rossini; in fact he rather gave a mighty impetus than founded a formal school, and the victory of romanticism in Opera is directly coupled with its deterioration. Rich in future (*zukunfstreich*) as were the new ideas that Weber brought into the Opera, yet the idiom of his style not seldom verged on mannerism.

Weber's most faithful follower is Heinrich Marschner. As we have already remarked, his originality rests chiefly on that humour which contrasts so sharply with the lyric sentimentalism, that humour which the romantic school of poets included in the concept "Irony." Here, in fact, Marschner has outstripped his model Weber, whereas he else has developed Weber's mannerism rather than his style. Goethe once defined modern Romanticism as the epoch of "forced talents." In view of Marschner's operas this definition's meaning becomes quite clear. Marschner stands on the watershed of two tendencies which severed company in Weber's musical bequest, and he still embraces both. For whereas some masters have seized on the genial (*sinnig gemüthliche*), popular, lyric element in Weber's operas, and evolved it farther, others have preferred to take the pathetic, forced, the sharply 'characteristic,' and thus have steered toward French neoromanticism. The first class is mainly represented by Konradin Kreutzer, the lyrist among German opera-composers. He bears the same relation to Weber, as Uhland to Tieck and Schlegel: what the Swabian school of poetry denotes in literature, that Kreutzer signifies in modern music. True, one opera alone of his has really prospered; but the stage success of that romantic nature-voice, which sings of spring and love, was all the more notable. Albeit in his operas he is mostly an eclectic inclining not a little to the Italian school, through his "Nachtlager von Granada" Kreutzer contributed much to the further acclimatisation, on the stage, of that typically German four-part male chorus which Weber introduced so brilliantly in his "Freischütz." Had he been a man of greater individual talent, his line would perchance have extended itself to a Bellinian epoch of German Opera. But the tide of our opera-music was setting in another direction, and these lyric beginnings of dramatic music stayed isolated. Even Löwe himself, who had sounded Weber's romantic note so successfully in song and ballad, and who of all others might have been called to add a greater wealth of thought to the lyric opera of Kreutzer,—even Löwe could bring to pass no really effective dramatic work. Lyric-



romantic Opera died out at last in little ballad-plays (*Liederspielen*), without the short series of its masters having been able to prolong itself to latter days. It came so near to taking one step farther, and evolving the *Lied*—now that it had once been imported into Opera—into a higher class of *Liederspiel*, in the same manner as the French had done with their “romances.” Only, this pretty (*sinnig*), harmless line of Opera was at variance with the route which the great majority of Weber’s followers speedily began to take. Lindpaintner and others had already attempted to reap for German romantic Opera the successes of Auber and the Italians, and thus had brought its style nearer and nearer to that French neoromanticism which was beginning to develop in Paris. Its pure, chaste German character was sacrificed in the interest of as strongly-spiced an effect as possible. An eclecticism threatening almost completely to banish Weber’s national tone began to gain the upper hand, and modern German Opera’s unstableness of outer forms thus first became a settled habit. But this evil was small in comparison with the profit which accrued to German Opera from its urging on toward French neoromanticism. This has been brilliantly displayed by Meyerbeer. His last three operas, “Robert le Diable,” the “Huguenots,” and the “Prophète,” are phenomena of a kind for which art-history can scarcely shew a parallel. What Weber, Rossini, Auber and Halévy had striven for, what the revolutionary art-tendencies of an entire epoch had uttered in the forms of three radically diverse nationalities—Meyerbeer, with wondrous combinatory talent, summed it up in one colossal whole. If one takes single fragments from his grand operas, and judges him by them, one can scarcely call him a German master, for he bows the knee to that musical cosmopolitanism begotten on the operatic stage of the world-city Paris. If one regards the daring architecture of the whole, however, one must avow that the German spirit alone could have built such works from the most heterogeneous fragments. Berlioz has rightly called Meyerbeer’s operas a musical encyclopedia, and with them in fact there begins for Modern Opera a period of extreme encyclo-

pedism. But however much of contradictory and conflicting, in this respect, may be assembled in his works, however little novelty of detail comes to light, yet the truly grandiose mass-effect revealed therein is something new, something full of promise for the future. Meyerbeer has not been ashamed to copy the inner corruption and dissoluteness of French neoromanticism in his operas; but he has also had the wit to extract from Auber's "Muette de Portici" and Rossini's "Tell" their profound art-historical title of right; he has detected the one great truth that underlies these works, and, making it his own, has given it its fullest expansion: artistic Emancipation of the Masses and operation through massed forces (*die Wirkung durch die Massen*). In this sense he has succeeded in an immense art-historical advance, the advance from Romantic to Historic Opera. Though his "Robert" still may stand upon the earlier step, the "Huguenots" and the "Prophète" are something more than mere Romantic operas. World-historical opposites are here brought before us in musical dramatisation. The antithesis of Protestantism and Catholicism, for instance, is not employed merely as a dramatic motive that acquires prominence in the external development of the plot, nor merely as the colour and costume of the age: it forms withal the musical root-character of the whole piece. Opera has here for the first time dared to present to our senses a world-historical deed as a musical one, to portray in the contrast of musical masses the conflict between two great ideas which have moved men's souls through centuries of time. A similar musical tendency is found in the "Prophète." What a vast advance upon the earlier character of Opera is here expressed! The whole aim of Opera has been displaced (*verrückt*) by Meyerbeer. No longer from the conflict of passions in individuals—and pranked they even with historic names, or were the whole opera characteristic in its local tints, as we find with Weber—no longer hence can the Opera of the Present take its subjects, if it means to acquit itself of its highest task: its musical theme has been broadened into a conflict of peoples, a conflict of eternal ideas in individuals.

Now, one would think that Modern Opera had thus been given a very definite goal, that all the experimenting and fumbling-around, in which the whole class is to this hour involved, had henceforth become superfluous. Only, the great problem which Meyerbeer has thrown out to musicians is still suspected by the fewest of them, to say nothing of being taken up and digested. Meyerbeer himself is a great mathematician (*Rechenmeister*), a great master-builder we will rather say, a man of the most thoroughly cultured art-intelligence, the most tried experience, who experimented long enough before he took at last a solid stand. When all is said, however, it was not any saturation by the artistic idea which he has spoken out, it was not the strong belief of genius, that drove him to the aforesaid path, but a masterly reckoning of effect. Thus alone can we explain the inner contradictions in Meyerbeer's operas, the often paltrily reflective, un-selfreliant working-out of details, for all the majestic newness of the idea that underlies the whole; thus alone can we account for his having so clearly espied the great truth that lay concealed in the works of the French neo-romanticists, and yet taking so readily into the bargain their whole æsthetic frivolity and depravation; thus alone is it explicable, how the same composer in all his detail-work, in every decorative flourish, could prove disloyal to his German nationality,\* and yet express the Opera's most German tendency as his root-idea. Until there comes a greater man, who, raised above these contradictions, shall take Historic Opera, now prophesied by Meyerbeer, and make it in one whole mould,—till then we shall forever be sent back to wavering empiricism.

Germany possesses one master who has well perceived what a great future is promised to Opera through the works of Meyerbeer [!]: we mean Richard Wagner. The inner contradictoriness of Meyerbeer's conglomerate style, its dalliance with the Paris

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\* Wagner finds an infinitely truer explanation, by dwelling on the fact that Meyerbeer was *not* a German.—Tr.

public's frivolous pursuit of pleasure, Wagner has well recognised; and his great tone-poems offer striking evidence that he has found in Beethoven a much greater master of neoromanticism, than Meyerbeer found in Auber and Rossini. That is a considerable step forward; for indeed it was a remarkable piece of infatuation, that our opera-composers should so long have overlooked the fact that it was not really the French, but Beethoven, who first proclaimed the musical emancipation of the masses, though only in the Symphony. Richard Wagner has sought to adapt to the German spirit the great achievement of Meyerbeer, in its full extension.\* Only, his genius is still not clarified within (*nicht in sich abgeklärt*); he, too, is still involved in inner contradictions, albeit contradictions of quite another sort than those we met in Meyerbeer; still does he lack that clear feeling of proportion (*Architectonik*) which enables Meyerbeer to range and govern even the most gigantic masses. Hence his operas have not yet been able to make themselves the common property of German stages: they have been unable to electrify the great public, because they did not grant it those concessions which Meyerbeer had granted. For the art-historian, however, they remain most notable phenomena, attempts that, even though imperfect in themselves, yet point the road on which our German Opera may go forth to meet its greatest future.

Whilst there was thus developing from out the Romantic school a tendency that made in Opera for the solution of Drama's highest problems, people on the other side were trying to bring back this art-variety to the modest claims of earlier days, and through the charm of outer grace, through giving prominence to the interesting, to court the superficial understanding of the crowd. If Meyerbeer proceeded encyclopedically, when into one frame he gathered all that other nations

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\* This author's contradictoriness is perhaps nowhere more evident than here: in every alternate sentence he says that Wagner is a follower, and a repudiator, of Meyerbeer! And *this* was the kind of criticism to which Wagner had to reply, not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of earlier masters.—TR.

had devised in the way of surprising, blinding, and truly grandiose effects, these latter masters borrowed still more from the Italians and French, wherever they could spy a pleasing form, a sensuous expression. Such an aim is nothing new, and German Opera has never lacked for eclectics of this stripe. In latter days even Reissiger, so clever at welding together the merits of diverse styles, has written operas in which Weber's prudish opposition to Italy seems almost turned quite round. Lindpaintner, also, had not been idle in this direction,—not to mention a whole shoal of minor Viennese composers. But Reissiger was one of the last German masters to comply with the old tradition of composing to Italian opera-texts; for he went so far as to set to music a text of Metastasio's—though that was at a time when in Dresden, too, there still survived that Italian Opera whose pedigree goes back in a straight line to Hasse. Thus too this hankering after foreignery (*Ausländerei*), which clung to Opera more persistently than to any other branch of art, was long enough kept alive through foreign masters acclimatised in Germany, such as Morlacchi, Chelard and others. One would scarcely have expected, however, that in quite the latest times—when the consciousness of nationality is shewing itself so sturdily in every art—German opera-composers would take to writing in downright French and Italian style, and gain a great success to boot. In this respect Flotow's operas are remarkable. If we did not know from other sources that Flotow is a German, we could hardly guess it from his operas. And yet these fluent but characterless, half-Italian, half-French melodies have rapidly made their way through the whole of Germany; these operas, whose highest aim is to be interesting and stageable, have established their footing at every German theatre. Anything like this would have been impossible in the realm of Plastic-art or Poetry. It stamps the very essence of Opera as a class of art still most unclear in itself, that such successes, which smite the nation's artistic sense across the face, should here be possible. If an Irishman, like Balfe, borrows his style from the Italians and



French, one cannot blame him for it; but with composers of a musically independent nation one should insist on other claims. Unfortunately the list of German opera-composers ensnared in the meshes of foreign operatic music is still a very lengthy one.

A quite individual path, is that which Lortzing has struck out. He too is an eclectic, but not so much as though he mixed the styles of diverse musical nationalities, as the styles of different ages. He wanted to compose comic operas. The tradition of German Comic Opera, however, had almost faded out, and among his contemporaries he would have sought in vain for a model. He therefore reached back to the days when in very deed our Comic Opera had opened a most dainty flower, to the Mozart-Haydn period; to this he added the kindly sounds of the Volkslied, as brought by Weber first upon the stage; nor did he blush to strew-in a dash of modern romanticism, for its higher seasoning. Thus there came into being a thing, if not original, at any rate quite homelike; though it is significant enough of our poverty in the matter of Comic Opera, that these works of Lortzing's have kept the field almost exclusively to themselves. Countless miscarried experiments have made the public so easily contented, that it strikes up a speedy friendship with a practical and common-sense opera, whereas such spirited and high-soaring efforts as those of Richard Wagner are scarcely able to effect an entrance. In confirmation, we may adduce the surprising success with which Gustav Schmidt's "*Prinz Eugen*," written pretty much in Lortzing's strain, but also leaning somewhat toward the French manner, has forced its way to almost every German theatre.

A host of considerable talents has scattered in all directions: were we to pursue the subject farther, there would be wellnigh nothing left but to make a special sketch of every unit, and often for sake of a handful of works that have perhaps been performed on one stage apiece. If we were merely to give their names, however, the reader would be none the wiser, for completeness is here quite out of the question. And just this, is the tragic fate of the modern German opera-composer—that Germany, as it lacks politi-

cal, lacks also any musical unity ; that no great central point exists, where the more considerable masters might foregather and combine for ends in common. Why! with all the troubles of our artist life, it is as much as most German composers can do, to find a stray moment for the composition of an opera! The Italians, most assuredly, would never have gained that practical grip, that certain technical dexterity in Opera, had they not always been composing operas and nothing else. The German opera-composer stands amid a literary and artistic confusion of tongues, which drives him first this way, then that, to-day upholds this goal to him, to-morrow that, as the highest ; and, for all his theoretic mastery, he is cut off from every opportunity of acquiring practical sureness. No longer is he naïve, bare-faced, impertinent enough, to troll his music as the day requires—like the Italians—and yet he lacks withal the firmness of a full art-scientific conviction. So he must go on making attempts for a while, must learn his lesson in the costliest way, from his mistakes. But he may console himself with the reflection that German Opera, despite its staggering condition, is facing toward an important future! Italian and French Opera, against their will, are taking more and more of the German element into themselves. Do not the Italians complain that even the latest work of Verdi, who otherwise has no particular elective-affinity to the German spirit, has turned out much too German? The first great task will be to take Historic Opera, as begun by Meyerbeer, to purify and consciously mature it ; and that task will either be accomplished by a German master, or stay unsolved for ever.

*(Conclusion.)*

As a final word on the late Ferd. Praeger's "Wagner as I knew him" (last mentioned in the *Meister*, No. XXVI.), we print the following translation of a letter lately received by Mr. H. S. Chamberlain from Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, the publishers of "*Wagner, wie ich ihn kannte*," i.e. of Praeger's own German version of his English book. The letter—with exception of the words "President of the London Wagner Society," and their replacement by asterisks—has already been published in the *Musical Standard* of the 13th ult., together with a lengthier explanation, to which we now refer our readers. The literal translation is as follows:—

"Leipzig, March 29th, 1895.—Very honoured Sir, After the article communicated to us, we naturally feel it our bounden duty to comply with your wish. We empower you to state that we withdrew Praeger's work from the book-market in Summer 1894, as soon as the untruthfulness of that publication had been proved to us. We are thankful to you for having at that time shewn us the facts of the case, for we of course will not tolerate upon our lists any work that distorts the truth. If we thought right at first to withdraw the book *in silence*, it was out of regard for the President of the London Wagner Society, who had stood sponsor to the publication in perfect good faith; we also then presumed that the other side would let the book repose among the dead.—With our respects, we remain yours BREITKOPF UND HÄRTEL."

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The Earl of Dysart on the 17th ult. resigned his Presidency and Membership of the Wagner Society, London; at the ensuing meeting of the Committee, Lord Dysart's resignation was accepted.

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"*A Commentary upon the Nibelung's Ring*" etc., "by Frank Parkinson, F.S.S., M.P.S."—This booklet, by the author of those singular works, "*Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*" and "*Classical Music*. How to understand it," has *not* been sent me for review, but I have studied it at the British Museum. Its architecture is of various orders. I will take first the Boeotian.

Upon page 66 occurs the following, *re the Walküre*:—"In the prelude there is the most original treatment of a Storm that has ever been written.

Throughout this drama the weather is very bad, and there are various kinds of storms, but this first is a magnificent one." Again, p. 146: "'Hot and high kindle the flames to consume the corse,' carry with them a very strong suggestion that Wagner favoured cremation."!!

Next the Delphic. Upon page 26: "A consideration often lost sight of in the estimation of the reader of commentaries is, that a commentator may mislead by forcing the expositions by other writers into a fancied *vraisemblance*, so that his work in reality becomes a commentary on the commentators, in precisely the same sort of way that a schoolboy, when writing a copy, imitates his own imperfect style, instead of striving to perfect it by always keeping the original copy under his view. Herein lies the key-note of faithful interpretation." This passage I defy anyone to make head or tail of; but, if it means anything at all, it means that Mr. Parkinson claims originality for his method of commenting. That brings me to his third order, which, to be pleasant, I will call the Autolycean.

In this pamphlet of 156 pages the *Meister* and other works have been pilaged right and left for whole sentences, sometimes for almost a page at one gulp, without so much as an acknowledgment or even the partial apology of inverted commas. From Mr. H. S. Chamberlain's "*Le Drame Wagnérien*" Mr. Parkinson has taken nearly half a page (184) and literally translated it for his own page 128; for his pages 65-6 he has made an ingenious, but also nonsensical, patchwork from pages 202-3 and 219 of Mr. Chamberlain's work. These are not the only instances of laying the latter gentleman under contribution, in this pamphlet, but I pass to Mons. Kufferath. On pages 39 to 41 of "*La Walkyrie*" there occurs a highly interesting footnote, to which I drew attention in the *Meister*, No. xxiv: half of this long note has been annexed by Mr. Parkinson for his pages 107-8, in literal translation—so far as one call that *literal* which, for "*a dû servir à des manifestations du culte druidique*," can fall into the grotesque blunder of "has served to show manifestations for the

Druidic cult." Of course M. Kufferath is never named, nor is there a ghost of a quotation mark.

But Mr. Parkinson may have his own "interpretation" of the laws of international copyright. I will therefore transfix him with passages transferred verbatim to his hybrid pamphlet from the *English* of other writers. Upon pages 31, 39 and 60, Mr. E. Dannreuther has been laid under contribution; the whole of a brilliant characterisation of Wagner's orchestra (occurring on p. 370 of vol. iv. of *Grove's Dictionary*) has been reproduced, a bit at a time, and word for word. The holocaust, however, is that gleaned from the *Meister*. On pages 32 and 111 appear whole sentences, textually appropriated from Mr. L. N. Parker's article in No. xxiii (pages 84 and 88). But Mr. W. C. Ward has been the greatest sufferer. It will be remembered that in Nos. v to viii of this journal, there was published a most ingeniously-reasoned and admirably written series of articles upon "The Nibelung's Ring," by Mr. Ward, to which, as Editor, I presumed to add a few footnotes. Wellnigh every sentence, both of text and footnotes, has passed bodily, or with disfigurements, into Mr. Parkinson's work! At random I select the following:—Parkinson page 33, *Meister* vol. ii. page 7; P. 41, *M.* 8; P. 82, *M.* 43 and 44; P. 110-1, *M.* 49; P. 117, *M.* 87; and so on ad infinitum. And this annexation has been perpetrated with such audacity that, on page 92, Mr. Parkinson talks of "my hypothesis" (i.e. *his*) when referring to the scheme of "interpretation" which he has deliberately plundered from Mr. Ward's articles and my notes, and reproduced for the most part in our very words!

Almost worse is his Composite order, whereof I select merely one example. On page 65 will be found these sentences, taken from the *Meister* No. vi. pages 41 and 42: Mr. Ward's unwilling contribution I will print in ordinary type, my own ditto in italics, and Mr. Parkinson's in **heavy type**—to somewhat redress the balance. "Wagner has preserved **Wotan's** duality of character, *as the Will he strives for that freedom from himself, which he foresees can only be accomplished by his own progeny. He seeks for this freedom among the manifestations of force; whilst his* opposition to the truth is contrary to his secret conviction; **he** is the Conscience of Creed, **and** typifies the profoundest thought of religious beliefs, begetting in the soul those aspirations which accomplish the end forbidden to the Creeds, and which by that very deed give the death blow to the latter, when **the truth is** obscured in the gathering mists of fiction and formality." This author (save the mark!) has omitted a word or two of the original, here and there; but the ingenuity shewn in the mosaic work, as in the avoidance of any more words of his own than he could help, is worthy of an honest cause. I must repeat, that nowhere is there given a hint of the borrowing.

Is there nothing original, then, in this miserable, this fatuous, this predatory pamphlet? Yes: its 'author' has counted the bars of music in Richard Wagner's dramas, and has arrived at a total, for all it is worth: about as useful as counting the stones in St Paul's Cathedral—a task I cheerfully commend to Mr. Parkinson, for it probably would occupy the remainder of his lifetime.

WM. ASHTON ELLIS.